



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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fairy tales; "Blue-Beard" is bloodthirsty and gruesome; the tone of "Cinderella" is all wrong; "Beauty and the Beast" is entirely unadaptable for children, and the same holds good of many of the much-vaunted tales of this calibre. On the other hand Hans Andersen is an ideal teller of tales and suited to the understanding of any child.

I would never restrict the reading of children who have begun to pick and choose for themselves. A child's mind is pure and he will only find purity where the less guileless reader might see evil. Even the most modern novel can make no plainer revelation of human nature than the child may meet with in the books of the Old Testament. A child, till it knows evil, is incapable of seeing evil. Children brought up to "abhor that which is evil" will pass through the fire unsinged. If we are always thinking of evil, and planning how children are to be sheltered from the least breath of contamination, the chances are that, when the full blast accosts them, they will fall amongst the first victims. Let us think no evil for children, only let us strive to make the life around them so good and true and pure that there may be no fear of evil in their thoughts.

Play-time—equally with lesson-time—is helping to build up men and women. There is honour in games, fair-play, chivalry, *esprit de corps*, attributes pertaining to the best men and women of every age. Parents of necessity trust their children's studies to duly qualified teachers; let them reserve this hour of play-time for themselves, and I doubt not but that these single hours will have a greater influence on the children's character than all the hours of the day's lessons put together.

We call it "The Children's Hour," surely it might with equal relevance be termed "The Parent's Hour." Mothers and fathers are learning much of their children's nature and character, they are themselves under the direct observation of the children—and there is little that escapes those bright penetrating eyes. We may be watching them, but at the same time they are watching us, and by our conduct we rise or fall in their estimation; it is the consistency of our behaviour that is creating the standard by which they will later judge others.

"Scale How" Tuesdays.*

JOHN MILTON.

By M. E. OWEN.

JOHN MILTON, the poet, was born in Bread Street, London, on the 9th December, 1608. Nature had done her best for him, both in person and mind, and at a very early age he began to raise in his father great hopes of his future capabilities. When only ten years old he showed symptoms of poetic gifts, but the earliest lines we have showing abundant promise of his future greatness are those "On the Death of a fair Infant," beginning

"Oh fairest flower, no sooner blown but blasted,"

and ending:—

"Then thou the mother of so sweet a child,
Her false-imagined loss cease to lament,
And wisely learn to curb thy sorrows wild;
Think what a present thou to God has sent,
And render Him with patience what he lent;
This if thou do He will an offspring give,
That till the world's last end shall make thy name to live."

These lines were written by Milton in his seventeenth year.

When ten years old the poet's father engaged a tutor for his instruction—Mr. Thomas Young. From the first the boy entered into study with extraordinary eagerness, and thus began that course of overstraining and weakness of the eyes which was to end in total blindness. When about sixteen

[* Our readers may remember our note about "Scale How Tuesdays," in the *Parents' Review* for September, 1903. It is the custom at the House of Education for one or another student to read an appreciation of some favourite author or composer, illustrated by extracts or compositions read or performed by some of those present. The information is of course gathered from such sources as were available. We venture to think that this should be a pleasant custom in families; so a series will be published month by month, in order to familiarise our readers with the plan. Even the younger members of a family would enjoy taking part in the readings.—ED.]

years of age he went to St. Paul's school, and soon afterwards to Christ's College, Cambridge. Here he distinguished himself in many ways, including the writing of Latin verses. He took his degree as M.A. in 1632, when twenty-four years old. We have promise of Milton's future in a college exercise written in his nineteenth year, a portion of which is almost as prophetic as it is beautiful, but it is not very generally known—

"Hail, native language, that by sinews weak
Didst move my first endeavouring tongue to speak,
And mad'st imperfect words with childish trips,
Half unpronounc'd, slide through my infant lips
* * * *

I have some naked thoughts that rove about
And loudly knock to have their passage out
And, weary of their place, do only stay
Till thou hast deck'd them in thy best array.
* * * *

Yet I had rather, if I were to choose,
Thy service in some graver subject use,
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound;
Such where the deep transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles, and at heaven's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,
Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings
To the touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings
Immortal nectar to her kingly sire:
Then passing through the spheres of watchful fire,
And misty regions of wide air next under,
And hills of snow and lofts of piled thunder,
May tell at length how green-eyed Neptune raves,
In heaven's defiance mustering all his waves;
Then sing of secret things that came to pass
When beldam Nature in her cradle was;
And last of kings and queens and heroes old,
Such as the wise Demodocus once told
In solemn songs at king Alcinous' feast,
While sad Ulysses' soul and all the rest
Are held with his melodious harmony
In willing chains and sweet captivity."

Milton's father had now retired to Horton, in Buckinghamshire, where his son joined him on leaving college. At Horton Milton continued his studies, reading the Greek and Roman classics.

There is something very pleasing in contemplating the early studiousness and the leisurely finished work of Milton's

early manhood. He is in no hurry to live through his career—only to lay the solid foundations of his work—to make each portion perfect so that no retouching or finishing should be required later. The poet alludes to his wish, to perfect himself in his foundations, before writing any great work, in the opening lines of "Lycidas," and also in the sonnet, "On his being arrived to the age of twenty-three."

"How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom showeth,
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endueth.
Yet be it less or more or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me and the will of Heaven;
All is if I have grace to use it so
As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye."

It was apparently at Horton that Milton wrote his immortal poems, "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Comus," and "Lycidas."

It is indeed probable that in these early years he wrote many poems of a less positive measure of excellence which have not come down to us; but whatever *has* come down from the Horton period is of its class a masterpiece. For stately discrimination of language, "Lycidas" is a model unsuperseded to the present day; the "Allegro" and "Penseroso" are almost the first fruits of descriptive poetry in English; "Comus" is both unlike and higher than any work that had preceded it under the designation of "a masque." This semi-dramatic work was performed in 1634, at Ludlow Castle, before the Earl of Ludlow, then Lord President of Wales.

(Songs, "Come, and trip it as you go," from "L'Allegro," and "Come, Pensive Nun," from "Il Penseroso," sung, and selections from "Lycidas" read here.)

It was from about this time, therefore, we may assume that, by the cultivated among his reading countrymen, Milton was understood to be a pre-eminent poet.

—Soon after the death of his mother in 1638, Milton went abroad. He was absent about a year and a quarter. His journey lay through France and Italy; he had intended to visit Sicily and Greece as well, but before he had done so he heard of the disturbances in England, so returned, being too patriotic to wish to stay away when events of such vital importance to the future of his country were in progress. The poet now engaged a house in Aldersgate Street, and undertook the education of several youths, including his two nephews. Milton instructed his pupils in the classic languages, Hebrew, mathematics, astronomy, French and Italian, and also prescribed martial and other exercises needed for the development of the perfect citizen.

In 1641 Milton published his first prose writings, which, far more than his poetry, gave him his conspicuous public standing during his lifetime. In the treatise on "The Reason of Church Government," Milton speaks of the great hope that was now growing daily upon him, the hope that, by labour and study—"which I take," he nobly says, "to be my portion in this life"—joined with the strong propensity of nature he "might perhaps leave something so written in aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die," and, as he goes on to say, "to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens, throughout this island, in the mother-dialect; that what the choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old, did for their country, I, in my proportion, with this over and above of being a Christian, might do for mine; not caring to be once named abroad, though perhaps I could attain to that, but content with these British Islands as my world"; and he again, more distinctly than before, though still only in general expressions, announced the great design "of highest hope, and hardest attempting," which he proposed to himself one day to accomplish. "The thing that I had to say," concluded this remarkable announcement, "and those intentions which have lived within me ever since I could conceive myself anything worth to my country, I return, to crave excuse that urgent reason hath plucked from me by an abhorrive and foredated discovery."

"Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing

reader, that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted; as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amouirist, or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite; nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her siren daughters; but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs. Till which in some measure accomplished, at mine own peril and cost I refuse not to sustain this expectation from as many as are not loth to hazard as much credulity upon the best pledges that I can give them."

The prose work of Milton that is best known in the present day is "Areopagitica: A speech of John Milton for the liberty of unlicensed Printing." Passages of great poetic splendour occur in some of these productions, and a fervid and fiery spirit breathes in all of them, though the animation is as apt to take the form of mere abuse as of lofty and dignified scorn, or of vigorous argument. Many things are happily said; there is much strong and some brilliant expression; but even such imbedded gems do not occur so often as might be looked for from so poetical a mind, and we must admit the truth of what he has himself confessed—that he was not naturally disposed to "this manner of writing;" "wherein," he adds, "knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may account it, but of my left hand."

In 1643 Milton had married Mary, the daughter of Richard Powell, of Forest Hill, Oxfordshire. The marriage was not a happy one, and after living with her husband for about a month Mrs. Milton left him for her father's house. After this Milton published *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, and in 1645, *Tetrachordon, or Expositions upon the four chief places in Scripture which treat of Marriage*. Nor did he stop here, but proceeded to court a young lady of great sense and beauty. However, one day when the poet was in the

house of a relative, his wife appeared and implored forgiveness. Milton relented, forgave and received back his wife and treated her kindly; indeed, soon afterwards in 1646, her loyalist father being involved in the catastrophe of the monarchy, he received this gentleman and his sons into his own house, and kept them there until their affairs were somewhat settled. This is the more striking when we remember that her father's influence had probably been exerted to disgust Mary Milton with her husband and his home.

In 1649 Milton published several political pamphlets, amongst others the *Second Defence for the English People*. (This was in answer to the *Defence of the King*, written on behalf of Charles II.). It gained great applause, and was remunerated by the English Government with the large sum of £1000. To Milton himself it was in fact a priceless effort, for it cost him his sight. He had been warned by the physicians that, in the then condition of his eyes, the labour of writing such a book might result in blindness. In spite of this, at the bidding of the Council of State he undertook the task, accomplished it, and paid the price. Few would have made such a sacrifice for their country! Milton speaks of this three years later in his second sonnet to Cyriac Skinner:—

"Cyriac, this three years' day these eyes, though clear
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light their seeing have forgot,
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year
Or man or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will; nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask
Content though blind, had I no better guide."

Milton was now an officer of high position in the English Commonwealth, having been appointed on the 15th of March, 1649, Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Council of State, a post chiefly concerned with the relations of England in Continental affairs. He was a very distinguished personage in the eyes of eminent foreigners. The poet continued to

occupy a like position under the Protectorship of Oliver Cromwell, also under Richard Cromwell and until the Restoration of Charles II. The salary of his office was nearly £300 per annum, but during the Protectorship it was reduced, and an assistant appointed—at first (it would seem) Philip Meadows—and afterwards the celebrated Andrew Marvell. For a while Milton lived at Whitehall, afterwards in lodgings opening on St. James' Park, and it was here that his youngest daughter was born, and his wife died in 1652.

It was about the end of 1653 or the early part of 1654 that total blindness overtook the poet. Although this calamity oppressed, it did not overwhelm him, as he tells us in the beautiful and pathetic "Sonnet on his Blindness":—

"When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
'Doth God exact day labour, light denied?'
I fondly ask; but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest,
They also serve who only stand and wait.'"

Before he had been blind a year Milton published his *Second Defence for the English People*, in which he expressed his adherence to Cromwell's cause. In 1656 Milton married his second wife, Katherine, the daughter of Captain Woodcock, of Hackney. With her he was happy, as one of the loveliest of his unequalled sonnets assures us. But death soon put an end to his contentment, for she died in February, 1658.

In 1663, Milton married again—on the recommendation of his friend, Dr. Paget—Elizabeth Minshull (the daughter of a gentleman in Cheshire), who was about thirty years younger than himself. His eldest daughter was now grown up, about seventeen years old, and only five or six years younger than her new step-mother, and his other two daughters were also living. Milton had somehow taught his daughters to read Latin, Greek and Hebrew to him without their knowing any of the sense of what they read. It must have been a

hard trial for them and they must have failed somewhat under it, for Milton is reported to have complained of their inattention to him.

Milton was by this time not only blind and ageing, but also disappointed—if disappointment can indeed be affirmed of so severe and lofty a soul—in all his most cherished hopes and expectations for the public weal. The despicable profligate Charles II. reoccupied the throne of England in May, 1660, soon after Milton had published *A Ready and Easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth*, opposing monarchy. Milton at the restoration left his home and lay concealed in a friend's house until the indemnity for heroes and patriots was published in August. Indeed there is a curious story that a mock funeral was enacted, so as to elude pursuers. Milton remained a while (it would seem) in the custody of the sergent-at-arms, and then returned to the neighbourhood of his former house in the city; and although inevitably distinguished by the disfavour of the people in power, suffered no further molestation of any importance.

Before these troubles began—perhaps in 1658 or even earlier—the poet had begun the great work of his life, "Paradise Lost." It consisted originally of only ten books instead of twelve as now. The price paid down for it was £5, to be followed by £15 upon the sale of a second and third large impression. Before "Paradise Lost," blank verse in the English language had been confined to dramatic works; Milton adopted this measure as alone suitable to so august a theme, and in his preliminary notice to the poem went so far as to denounce rhyme as trivial and barbarous.

In 1670, Michael Elwood, a well-meaning quaker admirer who acted from time to time as Milton's amanuensis, made a remark which set him upon the composition of "Paradise Regained." This was published along with "Samson Agonistes," in 1671. "Paradise Regained" must be considered only as an appendage to "Paradise Lost." It contains some highly finished and exquisite passages, but perhaps the only poetical quality in which it can be held to match, if it does not surpass "Paradise Lost," is picturesqueness. In this it is said to resemble the "Allegro" and "Penseroso."

In 1665, the poet left London, in which the Great Plague was raging, and lived awhile in the village of Chalfont St. Giles, in Buckinghamshire. When the epidemic was over he returned. His last habitation was in Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields. Milton's daughters did not live with their father during the last four or five years of his life.

The aged poet had been suffering from gout for some time, and his constitution was quite undermined by frequent attacks. He died on the 8th of November, 1674, aged sixty-six years. He left everything to his wife, which argues that she made him happy, though it is said she did not.

"If ever a man lived of whom an upright and intellectual nation may be proud, it is Milton."

Matthew Arnold says of him: "Milton, of all our English race, is by his diction and rhythm the one great artist of the highest rank in the great style whom we have. . . . The mighty power of poetry and art resides chiefly in the refining and elevation wrought in us by the high and rare excellence of the great style. We may feel the effect without being able to give ourselves clear account of its cause, but the thing is so. Now no race needs these influences of refining and elevation more than ours; and in poetry and art our grand source for them is Milton.

"To what does he owe this supreme distinction?"

"To nature first and foremost. . . . Nature formed Milton to be a great poet. But what other poet has shown so sincere a sense of the grandeur of his vocation, and a moral effort so constant and sublime to make and keep himself worthy of it? The Milton of religious and political controversy, and perhaps of domestic life also, is not seldom disfigured by want of amenity, by acerbity. The Milton of poetry, on the other hand, is one of those great men 'who are modest, because they continually compare themselves, not with other men, but with that idea of the perfect which they have before their mind.' The Milton of poetry is the man, in his own magnificent phrase, of 'devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases.' And finally the Milton of poetry is, in his own words again, the man of

industrious and select reading. Continually he lived in companionship with high and rare excellence, with the great Hebrew poets and prophets, with the great poets of Greece and Rome. The Hebrew compositions were not in verse, and can be not inadequately represented by the grand measured prose of our English Bible. The verse of the poets of Greece and Rome no translation can adequately reproduce. Prose cannot have the power of verse; verse-translation may give whatever of charm is in the soul and talent of the translator himself, but never the specific charm of the verse and poet translated.

"In our race are thousands of readers, presently there will be millions, who know not a word of Greek and Latin, and will never learn those languages. If this host of readers are ever to gain any sense of the power and charm of the great poets of antiquity, their way to gain it is not through translations of the ancients but through the original poetry of Milton, who has the like power and charm because he has the like great style. Through Milton they may gain it, for, in conclusion, Milton is English. . . . He has made the great style no longer an exotic here; he has made it an inmate amongst us, a leaven, and a power. Nevertheless he and his hearers on both sides of the Atlantic are English and will remain English. The English race overspreads the world, and at the same time the ideal of an excellence the most high and the most rare abides a possession with it for ever."

THE FÉSOLE CLUB PAPERS.

BY W. G. COLLINGWOOD.

XXIII. ON PAINTING HEADS.

Now, as to the first aim at a solid head,—the materials needed, and general manner of work. Life-sized studies have always been our rule. Of landscapes, and figures in landscapes, we can paint only distant views; and the best of these are but shadows; for their light is not to be matched and their detail is not to be fathomed even at the luckiest of times and by the cleverest of artists. But stones and flowers and faces can all be imitated in their own colours and forms, and by the student should be so imitated. As much finish as the subject needs, but no miniature-painting,—that I take to be one of the laws of Fésole.

A head of average size can be painted for purposes of study on your "quarto" board or block (14 by 10 inches) paper, not rough and not hot-pressed (Whatman's N). Have big brushes, sable and hog-hair, and warm, transparent colours. Vandyke brown, burnt and raw sienna, pink or rose madder, are all perfect paints, in this sense. Light red, yellow ochre, cobalt, though not so transparent, are useful. Have the ordinary colour-notes at your command; but if you want a pocket-box for figure sketching you will do well with these four alone:—Prussian blue, burnt sienna, raw sienna, pink madder. And yet for general practice the full scale of colour-notes is easiest to use. It is no apology for a bad sketch to plead limitation either in time or materials.

Now as to the first stage, the drawing. You can indeed outline the general shape of the head, cheek and chin, and fix the forms of the hair as seen against background and face; but our use of the outline has always been to fix the contours of colour-masses, not to define details. In a head, the features are the details. They are not separate colour-masses, and